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Moonshine

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MOONSHINE

A One-Act Play

By

Arthur Hopkins

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Arthur Hopkins

Producer of "REDEMPTION," "THE JEST," "NIGHT LODGING," "THE DELUGE," "MACBETH," etc.

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CHARACTERS

LUKE HAZY, Moonshiner
A REVENUE OFFICER

1099644

Moonshine

SCENE: *Hut of a moonshiner in the mountain wilds of North Carolina. Door back left. Window back right center. Old deal table right center. Kitchen chair at either side of table, not close to it. Old cupboard in left corner. Rude stone fireplace left side. On back wall near door is a rough pencil sketch of a man hanging from a tree.*

At rise of curtain a commotion is heard outside of hut.

LUKE. *(Off stage)* It's all right, boys. . . . Jist leave him to me. . . . Git in there, Mister Revenue. *(*REVENUE, *a Northerner in city attire, without hat, clothes dusty, is pushed through doorway.* LUKE, *a lanky, ill-dressed Southerner, following, closes door.* REVENUE'S *hands are tied behind him)* You must excuse the boys for makin' a demonstration over you, Mr. Revenue, but you see they don't come across you fellers very frequent, and they allas gits excited.

REVENUE. I appreciate that I'm welcome.

LUKE. Deed you is, and I'm just a-goin' to untie your hands long nuff fer you to take a sociable drink. *(Goes to stranger, feels in all pockets for weapons)* Reckon yer travelin' peaceable. *(Unties hands)* Won't yer sit down?

REVENUE. *(Drawing over chair and sitting)* Thank you. *(Rubs wrists to get back circulation)*

LUKE. *(Going over to cupboard and taking out jug)* Yessa, Mister, the boys ain't seen one o' you

fellers fer near two years. Began to think you wus goin' to neglect us. I wus hopin' you might be Jim Dunn. Have a drink?

REVENUE. *(Starts slightly at mention of Jim Dunn)* No, thank you, your make is too strong for me.

LUKE. It hain't no luck to drink alone when you got company. Better have some.

REVENUE. Very well, my friend, I suffer willingly. *(Drinks a little and chokes)*

LUKE. *(Draining cup)* I reckon ye all don't like the flavor of liquor that hain't been stamped.

REVENUE. It's not so bad.

LUKE. The last Revenue that sit in that chair got drunk on my make.

REVENUE. That wouldn't be difficult.

LUKE. No, but it wuz awkward.

REVENUE. Why?

LUKE. I had to wait till he sobered up before I give him his ticket. I didn't feel like sendin' him to Heaven drunk. He'd 'a' found it awkward climbin' that golden ladder.

REVENUE. Thoughtful executioner.

LUKE. So you see mebbe you kin delay things a little by dallyin' with the licker.

REVENUE. *(Picking up cup, getting it as far as his lips, slowly puts it down)* The price is too great.

LUKE. I'm mighty sorry you ain't Jim Dunn. But I reckon you ain't. You don't answer his likeness.

REVENUE. Who's Jim Dunn?

LUKE. You ought to know who Jim Dunn is. He's just about the worst one of your revenue critters that ever hit these parts. He's got four of the boys in jail. We got a little reception all ready

for him. See that? *(Pointing to sketch on back wall)*

REVENUE. *(Looking at sketch)* Yes.

LUKE. That's Jim Dunn.

REVENUE. *(Rising, examining picture)* Doesn't look much like anyone.

LUKE. Well, that's what Jim Dunn'll look like when we git 'im. I'm mighty sorry you hain't Jim Dunn.

REVENUE. I'm sorry to disappoint you.

LUKE. *(Turning to cupboard and filling pipe)* Oh, it's all right. I reckon one Revenue's about as good as another, after all.

REVENUE. Are you sure I'm a revenue officer?

LUKE. *(Rising)* Well, since we ketched ye climin' trees an' snoopin' round the stills, I reckon we won't take no chances that you hain't.

REVENUE. Oh.

LUKE. Say, mebbe you'd like a seggar. Here's one I been savin' fer quite a spell back, thinkin' mebbe I'd have company some day. *(Brings out dried-up cigar, hands it to him)*

REVENUE. No, thank you.

LUKE. It hain't no luck to smoke alone when ye got company. *(Striking match and holding it to* REVENUE.*)* Ye better smoke. *(*REVENUE *bites off end and mouth is filled with dust, spits out dust.* LUKE *holds match to cigar. With difficulty* REVENUE *lights it.)* That's as good a five-cent cigar as ye can git in Henderson.

REVENUE. *(After two puffs, makes wry face, throws cigar on table)* You make death very easy, Mister.

LUKE. Luke's my name. Yer kin call me Luke. Make you feel as though you had a friend near you at the end—Luke Hazy.

REVENUE. *(Starting as though interested, rising)*

Not the Luke Hazy that cleaned out the Crosby family?

LUKE. *(Startled)* How'd you hear about it?

REVENUE. Hear about it? Why, your name's been in every newspaper in the United States. Every time you killed another Crosby the whole feud was told all over again. Why, I've seen your picture in the papers twenty times.

LUKE. Hain't never had one took.

REVENUE. That don't stop them from printing it. Don't you ever read the newspapers?

LUKE. Me read? I hain't read nothin' fer thirty years. Reckon I couldn't read two lines in a hour.

REVENUE. You've missed a lot of information about yourself.

LUKE. How many Crosbys did they say I killed?

REVENUE. I think the last report said you had just removed the twelfth.

LUKE. It's a lie! I only killed six . . . that's all they wuz—growed up. I'm a-waitin' fer one now that's only thirteen.

REVENUE. When'll he be ripe?

LUKE. Jes as soon as he comes a-lookin' fer me.

REVENUE. Will he come?

LUKE. He'll come if he's a Crosby.

REVENUE. A brave family?

LUKE. They don't make 'em any braver—they'd be first-rate folks if they wuzn't Crosbys.

REVENUE. If you feel that way why did you start fighting them?

LUKE. I never started no fight. My grandad had some misunderstandin' with their grandad. I don't know jes what it wuz about, but I reckon my grandad wuz right, and I'll see it through.

REVENUE. You must think a lot of your grandfather.

LUKE. Never seen 'im, but it ain't no luck goin' again yer own kin. Won't ye have a drink?

REVENUE. No—no—thank you.

LUKE. Well, Mr. Revenue, I reckon we might as well have this over.

REVENUE. What?

LUKE. Well, you won't get drunk, and I can't be put to the trouble o' havin' somebody guard you.

REVENUE. That'll not be necessary.

LUKE. Oh, I know yer like this yer place now, but this evenin' you might take it into yer head to walk out.

REVENUE. I'll not walk out unless you make me.

LUKE. 'Tain't like I'll let yer, but I wouldn't blame yer none if yu tried.

REVENUE. But I'll not.

LUKE. *(Rising)* Say, Mistah Revenue, I wonder if you know what you're up against?

REVENUE. What do you mean?

LUKE. I mean I gotta kill you.

REVENUE. *(Rising, pauses)* Well, that let's me out.

LUKE. What do yu mean?

REVENUE. I mean that I've been trying to commit suicide for the last two months, but I haven't had the nerve.

LUKE. *(Startled)* Suicide?

REVENUE. Yes. Now that you're willing to kill me, the problem is solved.

LUKE. Why, what d'ye want to commit suicide fer?

REVENUE. I just want to stop living, that's all.

LUKE. Well, yu must have a reason.

REVENUE. No special reason—I find life dull and I'd like to get out of it.

LUKE. Dull?

REVENUE. Yes—I hate to go to bed—I hate to

get up—I don't care for food—I can't drink liquor —I find people either malicious or dull—I see by the fate of my acquaintances, both men and women, that love is a farce. I have seen fame and preference come to those who least deserved them, while the whole world kicked and cuffed the worthy ones. The craftiest schemer gets the most money and glory, while the fair-minded dealer is humiliated in the bankruptcy court. In the name of the law every crime is committed; in the name of religion every vice is indulged; in the name of education greatest ignorance is rampant.

LUKE. I don't git all of that, but I reckon you're some put out.

REVENUE. I am. The world's a failure. . . . what's more, it's a farce. I don't like it but I can't change it, so I'm just aching for a chance to get out of it. . . . *(Approaching* LUKE*)* And you, my dear friend, are going to present me the opportunity.

LUKE. Yes, I reckon you'll get your wish now.

REVENUE. Good . . . if you only knew how I've tried to get killed.

LUKE. Well, why didn't you kill yerself?

REVENUE. I was afraid.

LUKE. Afreed o' what—hurtin' yourself?

REVENUE. No, afraid of the consequences.

LUKE. Whad d'ye mean?

REVENUE. Do you believe in another life after this one?

LUKE. I kan't say ez I ever give it much thought.

REVENUE. Well, don't—because if you do you'll never kill another Crosby . . . not even a revenue officer.

LUKE. 'Tain't that bad, is it?

REVENUE. Worse. Twenty times I've had a revolver to my head—crazy to die—and then as my

finger pressed the trigger I'd get a terrible dread—a dread that I was plunging into worse terrors than this world ever knew. If killing were the end it would be easy, but what if it's only the beginning of something worse?

LUKE. Well, you gotta take some chances.

REVENUE. I'll not take that one. You know, Mr. Luke, life was given to us by someone who probably never intended that we should take it, and that someone has something ready for people who destroy his property. That's what frightens me.

LUKE. You do too much worryin' to be a regular suicide.

REVENUE. Yes, I do. That's why I changed my plan.

LUKE. What plan?

REVENUE. My plan for dying.

LUKE. Oh, then you didn't give up the idea?

REVENUE. No, indeed—I'm still determined to die, but I'm going to make someone else responsible.

LUKE. Oh—so you hain't willing to pay fer yer own funeral music?

REVENUE. No, sir—I'll furnish the passenger, but someone else must buy the ticket. You see when I finally decided I'd be killed I immediately exposed myself to every danger I knew.

LUKE. How?

REVENUE. In a thousand ways. . . . *(Pause)* Did you ever see an automobile?

LUKE. No.

REVENUE. They go faster than steam engines, and they don't *stay* on tracks. Did you ever hear of Fifth Avenue, New York?

LUKE. No.

REVENUE. Fifth Avenue is jammed with automobiles, eight deep all day long. People being killed every day. I crossed Fifth Avenue a thousand

times a day, every day for weeks, never once trying to get out of the way, and always praying I'd be hit.

LUKE. And couldn't yu git hit?

REVENUE. *(In disgust)* No. Automobiles only hit people who try to get out of the way. *(Pause)* When that failed I frequented the lowest dives on the Bowery, flashing a roll of money and wearing diamonds, hoping they'd kill me for them. They stole the money and diamonds, but never touched me.

LUKE. Couldn't you pick a fight?

REVENUE. I'm coming to that. You know up North they believe that a man can be killed in the South for calling another man a liar.

LUKE. That's right.

REVENUE. It is, it is? Well, I've called men liars from Washington to Atlanta, and I'm here to tell you about it.

LUKE. They must a-took pity on ye.

REVENUE. Do you know Two Gun Jake that keeps the dive down in Henderson?

LUKE. I should think I do. . . . Jake's killed enough of 'em.

REVENUE. He's a bad man, ain't he?

LUKE. He's no trifler.

REVENUE. I wound up in Jake's place two nights ago, pretending to be drunk. Jake was cursing, ~~niggers~~.

LUKE. He's allus doin' that.

REVENUE. So I elbowed my way up to the bar and announced that I was an expert in the discovery of ~~nigger~~ Negro blood . . . could tell a ~~nigger~~ Negro who was 63-64th white.

LUKE. Ye kin?

REVENUE. No, I can't, but I made them believe it. I then offered to look them over and tell them if they had any ~~nigger~~ Negro blood in them. A few of

them sneaked away, but the rest stood for it. I passed them all until I got to Two Gun Jake. I examined his eyeballs, looked at his finger-nails, and said, "You're a nigger." one.

LUKE. An' what did Jake do?

REVENUE. He turned pale, took me into the back room, and said: "Honest to God, Mister, can ye see heave blood in me?" I said: "Yes." "There's no mistake about it?" "Not a bit," I answered. "Good God," he said, "I always suspected it." Then he pulled out his gun. . . .

LUKE. Eh . . . eh?

REVENUE. And shot *himself.*

LUKE. Jake shot hisself! . . . is he dead?

REVENUE. I don't know—I was too disgusted to wait. I wandered around until I thought of you moonshiners. . . .scrambled around in the mountains until I found your still. I *sat* on it and waited until you boys showed up, and here I am, and you're going to kill me.

LUKE. *(Pause)* Ah, so ye want us to do yer killin' fer ye, do ye?

REVENUE. You're my last hope. If I fail this time I may as well give it up.

LUKE. *(Takes out revolver, turns sidewise and secretly removes cartridges from chamber. Rises).* What-wuz that noise? *(Lays revolver on table and steps outside of door.* REVENUE *looks at revolver apparently without interest.* LUKE *cautiously enters doorway and expresses surprise at seeing* REVENUE *making no attempt to secure revolver. Feigning excitement goes to table, picks up gun)*

LUKE. I reckon I'm gettin' careless, leavin' a gun layin' around here that-a-way. Didn't you see it?

REVENUE. Yes.

LUKE. Well, why didn't ye grab it?

REVENUE. What for?

LUKE. To git the drop on me.

REVENUE. Can't you understand what I've been telling you, Mister? I don't *want* the drop on you.

LUKE. Well, doggone if I don't believe yer tellin' me the truth. Thought I'd just see what ye'd do. Ye see, I emptied it first. *(Opens up gun)*

REVENUE. That wasn't necessary.

LUKE. Well, I reckon ye better git along out o' here, Mister.

REVENUE. You don't mean you're weakening?

LUKE. I ain't got no call to do your killin' fer you. If ye hain't sport enough to do it yerself, I reckon ye kin go on sufferin'.

REVENUE. But I told you why I don't want to do it. One murder more or less means nothing to you. You don't care anything about the hereafter.

LUKE. Mebbe I don't, but there ain't no use my takin' any more chances than I have to. And what's more, Mister, from what you been tellin' me I reckon there's a charm on you, and I ain't goin' to take no chances goin' agin charms.

REVENUE. So *you're* going to go back on me?

LUKE. Yes, sirree.

REVENUE. Well, maybe some of the other boys will be willing. I'll wait till they come.

LUKE. The other boys ain't goin' to see you. You're a-leavin' this yer place right now—now! It won't do no good. You may as well go peaceable, ye ain't got no right to expect us to bear yer burdens.

REVENUE. Damn it all! I've spoiled it again.

LUKE. I reckon you better make up yer mind to go on livin'.

REVENUE. That looks like the only way out.

LUKE. Come on, I'll let you ride my horse to town. It's the only one we got, so yu can leave it at

Two Gun Jake's, and one o' the boys'll go git it, or I reckon I'll go over myself and see if Jake made a job of it.

REVENUE. I suppose it's no use arguing with you.

LUKE. Not a bit. Come on, you.

REVENUE. Well, I'd like to leave my address so if you ever come to New York you can look me up.

LUKE. 'Tain't likely I'll ever come to New York.

REVENUE. Well, I'll leave it, anyhow. Have you a piece of paper?

LUKE. Paper what you write on? Never had none, Mister.

REVENUE. *(Looking about room, sees Jim Dunn's picture on wall, goes to it, takes it down)* If you don't mind, I'll put it on the back of Jim Dunn's picture. *(Placing picture on table, begins to print)* I'll print it for you, so it'll be easy to read. My address is here, so if you change your mind you can send for me.

LUKE. 'Tain't likely—come on. *(Both go to doorway—*LUKE *extends hand,* REVENUE *takes it)* Good-bye, Mister—cheer up . . . there's the horse.

REVENUE. Good-bye. *(Shaking* LUKE's *hand)*

LUKE. Don't be so glum, Mister. Lemme hear you laff jist onct before yu go. *(*REVENUE *begins to laugh weakly)* Aw, come on, laff out with it hearty. *(*REVENUE *laughs louder)* Heartier yit. *(*REVENUE *is now shouting his laughter, and is heard laughing until hoof beats of his horse die down in the distance.* LUKE watches for a moment, then returns *to table—takes a drink—picks up picture—turns it around several times before getting it right—then begins to study. In attempting to make out the name he slowly traces in the air with his index finger a capital "J"—then mutters "J-J-J," then describes a letter "I"—mutters "I-I-I," then a letter "M"—mut-*

tering "M-M-M, J-I-M—J-I-M—JIM." In the same way describes and mutters "D-U-N-N")

LUKE. Jim Dunn! By God! *(He rushes to corner, grabs shot-gun, runs to doorway, raises gun in direction stranger has gone—looks intently—then slowly lets gun fall to his side, and scans the distance with his hand shadowing his eyes—steps inside—slowly puts gun in corner—seats himself at table)* Jim Dunn!—and he begged me to kill 'im!!

CURTAIN

(off laughing)

Luke- Queer acting fellow--wonder what his name is. Let me see. J---J*J*J I JI----I**I* M--- M M. J-I-M M JIM. D---D--U-U**--NN Du----Jim Dunn By Gad--Jim Dunn. And he begged me to kill him. Jim Dunn. Jim Dunn.

Finis.

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